
XVII. *Description of Menura superba, a Bird of New South Wales.*
By Major-General Thomas Davies, F.R.S. and L.S.

Read November 4, 1800.

MENURA.

CHAR. GEN. *Rostrum validiusculum, convexo-conicum.*

Nares ovatae in medio rostri.

*Reetrices elongatae, pinnulis decompositis; intermediae
2 longiores angustae, exteriores ad apicem patulae,
revolutae.*

Pedes validi ambulatorii.

MENURA SUPERBA.

TAB. XXII.

THE total length of this singular bird from the point of the bill to the end of the broad tail feathers is 43 inches; 25 of which are in the tail alone. The bill rather exceeds an inch in length, is strong, formed much like that of a peacock, and black, with the nostrils, which are long open slits, rather large, placed near the middle of its length. The head, which is somewhat crested at the hind part, neck, shoulders, back, upper tail coverts, and upper surface of the tail feathers, of a dark brownish black. Throat rufous, reaching some way down the middle of the neck. Breast, belly, and vent gray. The feathers of the latter are long, very soft, and of a silky texture. Thighs nearly of the same colour, rather long, and feathered

down to the knee. Scapulars of a brownish tinge. Upper tail coverts, and prime quill feathers, which are somewhat curved at the ends, brown black. Edges of the quills gray. The legs long and very strong, covered with large scales, especially in front. The feet, which are likewise large, and the nails, are black; the last somewhat crooked, convex above and flat beneath; the hind nail near three quarters of an inch long.

The tail consists, in the whole, of sixteen feathers; all of which, except the two upper or middle ones, and the two exterior on each side, have long slender shafts furnished on each side with delicate long filaments, four inches or more in length, placed pretty close towards the rump, but more distant from each other as they approach the extremity, and resemble much those of the Greater Paradise Bird. The two middle or upper ones are longer than the rest, slender, narrow at the base, growing wider as they approach the ends, which are pointed; webbed on the inner edge all the way, and furnished with some distant hair-like threads near the end on the outer side, of a pale gray colour beneath, and brown black above, as is the rest of the tail. The two exterior feathers on each side are of an extraordinary construction, rather more than an inch wide at the base, and growing wider as they proceed to the ends, where they are full two inches broad and curve outwardly; the curved part is black with a narrow white border; the quills of these feathers are double for two thirds down from the rump. The general colour of the under sides of these two feathers is of a pearly hue, elegantly marked on the inner web with bright rufous coloured crescent-shaped spots, which, from the extraordinary construction of the parts, appear wonderfully transparent, although at first sight seemingly the darkest; they are also elongated into slender filaments of an inch or more, especially towards the extremities.

The figure of the male, which accompanies this description, was
taken

taken from a specimen sent from New South Wales as a present to Lady Mary Howe. I have also seen two other specimens in the possession of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks, which I believe have since been deposited in the British Musæum.

SINCE I had the honour of communicating to the Linnean Society the foregoing description of the *Menura*, I have been favoured with both male and female of that extraordinary bird from my friend Governor King, by the Buffalo store-ship; and I am thereby enabled to lay before the Society a description of the different sexes. I find, indeed, that with a little deviation the same characters and colours will serve for both of them. The female, however, is somewhat smaller, being in length, from the crown of the head to the end of the tail, only 31 inches. The general plumage of the whole bird is of a dull blackish colour, a little rufous under the chin and throat, and of a brownish cast on the scapulars, as in the male. The plumage of the whole body, from the breast to the vent, and from the shoulders to the rump, is composed of long, slender, thread-like, silky feathers, resembling fringe, of a dull grayish black; lighter on the breast, belly, and vent. The bill and legs, which are strong and furnished with large scales, as in the cock, are black. From the head to the rump 14 inches. The tail 18 inches, also of a dull brown black colour above and gray beneath. The two upper tail feathers are sharp pointed at the ends; the rest are rounded and darker in colour, and shorten by degrees, as they approach the rump, so as to appear cuneated. The two outer feathers are shorter than the rest, bent in form like those of the male, brown black above, of a pearly gray beneath; and the crescents, which are

of a deeper rufous colour, are not so visible nor so large, but more transparent if possible, than those of the cock. They are about an inch and a half broad, and not black or longer at the ends as in the other sex.

From these birds being found in the hilly parts of the country, they are called by the inhabitants the Mountain Pheasant. With respect to their food or manners I have not as yet obtained any particular account. In my specimens, there is a nakedness round the eyes, but whether this is from the feathers having fallen off I know not. I rather think otherwise, and that it may be brightly coloured as in many other birds.

Blackheath,
19th June, 1801.